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DE RUEHLGB #0033 0221546
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 221546Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5848
INFO RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0379
RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 0477
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 1291
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2067
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0624
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0393
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 1399
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0655
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0194

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 000033

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR P AND AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/201
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SUBJECT: SUPPORTING THE JOINT CONGOLESE AND RWANDAN EFFORT

REF: 08 KIGALI 875

Classified By: Ambassador Symington for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) As the international community awaits details of the joint Congolese/Rwandan military effort in the Kivus, it is essential we keep in mind what a sea change this joint operation represents. After many ups and downs, and often sharp disagreements on what has been happening in the eastern Congo and what to do about it, the two governments have -- through intense negotiations at many levels -- reached a common understanding on the way forward.

Both now agree that the FDLR, as the root cause of instability in the Kivus, should and will be the focus of these joint operations. In Kigali, Kabila's decision to work in tandem with Kagame on these joint operations is seen as a forthright and courageous affirmation of the new partnership between their two governments.

¶2. (C) This partnership and the resultant joint military operations have already redefined the political and security landscape in the region. At a minimum, a significant reduction in the FDLR's authority, independence and operational capacity may result. These operations may also have a profound impact on other destabilizing elements, such as the CNDP, in the eastern Congo.

¶3. (C) We should not focus heavily on ascertaining the exact numbers of RDF troops now in the Congo, or the exact operational details or timelines, or on public or private comments by either government on these and other varying details. Rather, we must keep our attention focused on the efforts of the two leaders who are now working in partnership to achieve their respective security and humanitarian objectives. The international community encouraged Kagame and Kabila to address these issues. Now is the time to assist this unprecedented opportunity to increase collateral good, and reduce collateral damage.
SYMINGTON